Acknowledgement

This thesis work not only embodies years of my academic rigour and discipline, but also guidance, motivation, blessings, love and effort put forward by a lot of people. I owe my sincere gratitude to all of them for helping me to move toward this important milestone of my academic career.

Prof. Anil Bhat has been the proverbial *Guru*, who guided me at every turn of events during this entire journey. His unflinching support, unwavering patience, diversified knowledge and constant encouragement exemplified the qualities of a true *Guru*, who does not steer the disciple by holding hands, but by showing the way. I shall always revere him as the guiding star of my life and pray that his blessings will continue to shower on me forever.

Fourteen years after I heard the name of BITS Pilani, I got a chance to be a part of it and experience its magic. I thank all BITSians, who are serving this institute in any capacity, for creating this wonderland. I hereby express my special gratitude to the Vice Chancellor- Prof. Souvik Bhattacharyya- for providing the necessary infrastructure and facilities conducive to research. Prof. A.K. Sarkar, the Director of BITS Pilani (Pilani Campus) has been a source of inspiration and advice during my brief interaction at several times with him.

I am thankful to Prof. S.K. Verma, Dean of Academic Research (Ph.D. Programme) Division, and Prof. Hemant Jadhav, Associate Dean of Academic Research (Ph.D. Programme) Division, for their support during the research work. I am especially thankful to Mr. Giridhar Kunkur, Librarian and Chief, Publications and Media Relations Unit, BITS Pilani, for arranging various seminars and workshops to facilitate research work and ensuring easy access to a wide range of literature through various medium.

Members of my Departmental Advisory Committee- Dr. Leela Rani and Dr. Sarvesh Satija-have contributed a lot of their precious time to improve the thesis by providing valuable suggestions and input. I am grateful to them for their contribution in this thesis. I sincerely thank the Departmental Research Committee convenor, Dr. Arun Kumar, for extending his support to make collaboration smooth among faculty members of the department and others in the institute. I also thank Dr. Jyoti Tikoria, Dr. Jayashree Mahesh, Dr. R. Raghunathan and Dr. Satyendra K. Sharma for their help and advice at various stages during this journey. I am thankful to Dr. Rajesh Matai, Dr. Udayan Chanda, Dr. Praveen Goyal, Dr. Neetu Yadav and Dr. Anubha Dadhich for kindly providing their advice during various seminars presented as a

part of the academic process. I also thank research scholars of the department for extending their support and creating a friendly atmosphere in the department.

Faculty and Researcher Scholars from other departments too have supported me by sometimes arranging required research papers, exchanging some administrative duties and even, providing food! They have made my stay in the campus memorable. I thank them for their continuous help and support.

I owe a lot to the wonderful teachers at various phases of my life. I express my gratitude to all of them for the lessons they imparted to me. Without the blessings of my parents and mental support of my in-laws, I would not have been able to continue with this arduous journey. I pray to the Almighty to grant them healthy and happy life. I thank my friends, neighbours and students for always motivating me with their encouraging words.

My family has been extraordinarily supportive during the entire phase of PhD. My beloved wife- Usha showed relentless courage by properly maintaining the family in my absence. My effervescent little son- Aarush, whom I left at the age of three and a half months to pursue full time PhD- was deprived of my continuous company for almost five years of his initial life to ensure that his daddy finishes "school" properly. They have been my source of strength whenever I stumbled on a hurdle, and provided the impetus to move forward with renewed energy. I dedicate the thesis to my loving family.

Nirankush Dutta